

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-09

NSAE-00 RSC-01 EUR-10 T-01 PRS-01 IO-03 L-02 RSR-01

PM-03 DODE-00 PA-01 USIA-04 /067 W
----- 058102

R 141141 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8337

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 2133

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PK

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT BHUTTO ON DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION

1. SUMMARY: PRES BHUTTO ACKNOWLEDGED SOME CURRENT POLITICAL PROBLEMS BUT EXPRESSED GENERAL CONFIDENCE IN HIS ABILITY TO COPE WITH THEM. HE FORESEES NEW CONSTITUTION COMING INTO FORCE IN AUGUST AND IS THINKING OF CALLING FOR NEW NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS FOR DECEMBER. END SUMMARY

2. PRES BHUTTO ASKED ME TO CALL ON HIM MARCH 13. WE SPENT 80 MINUTES DISCUSSING VARIOUS SUBJECTS (SEPTELS) IN ADDITION DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION REPORTED HEREIN. BHUTTO LOOKED FIT ALTHOUGH A BIT TIRED, PROBABLY FROM HECTIC PACE OF HIS ACTIVITY.

3. WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS FACING
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HIM, BHUTTO INDICATED GENERAL CONFIDENCE THAT HE CAN COPE WITH THEM AND RETAIN CONTROL OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION. HE ELABORATED AT SOME LENGTH ON ACCOUNT GIVEN ME TWO WEEKS AGO BY PUNJAB GOVERNOR KHAR OF POLITICAL MANOEUVRES INVOLVING NAP LEADER WALI KHAN AND BALUCHISTAN (NAP) GOVERNOR BIZENJO PRIOR TO BHUTTO' S DISMISSAL OF GOVERNORS IN NWFP AND BALUCHISTAN (ISLAMABAD 1709). HE WAS BITTER OVER WALI' S UN-RELIABILITY IN ASKING FOR A " FACESAVER" ON CONSTITUTION, THEN GOING BACK ON HIS WORD AND LAUNCHING SHARP PUBLIC ATTACK ON PRESIDENT. BHUTTO TOLD ME WALI HAD ALSO TRIED TO WIN OVER GOV KHAR, SUGGESTING THAT HE WOULD BACK KHAR AS PPP LEADER TO REPLACE BHUTTO. NOTING THAT KHAR IS HIS CLOSEST FRIEND AND ASSOCIATE, BHUTTO REMARKED THAT WALI' S MANOEUVRE DID NOT WORK. HE ALSO HAD HARSH COMMENTS ON FORMER BALUCHISTAN (NAP) CHIEF MINISTER MENGAL, WHOM HE SAID HAD BEEN SPREADING LIES ABOUT HIM. ON OTHER HAND, BHUTTO HAD GOOD WORDS FOR EX- GOV BIZENJO. PERHAPS REFLECTING UNCERTAINTY OVER HIS ABILITY TO FORM NEW COALITION GOVT IN BALUCHISTAN INCLUDING NAP, BHUTTO SAID HE PLANNED TO CALL IN BIZENJO AND TALK WITH HIM. BHUTTO SEEMED TO FEEL MORE CONFIDENT ABOUT FORMATION OF NEW GOVT IN NWFP, WHICH ALSO NOW PENDING.

4. REVERTING TO BALUCHISTAN, BHUTTO SAID AKBAR BUGTI, WHOM HE APPOINTED LAST MONTH, WILL REMAIN AS GOVERNOR REGARDLESS OF HOW NEW GOVT IS FORMED IN PROVINCE. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT BUGTI (HE HAS " A COUPLE OF SCREWS LOOSE") IS NOT MOST RELIABLE MAN IN THE WORLD BUT HE HAS STRONG TRIBAL POSITION AND SEEMS TO BE RIGHT MAN TO DO PRESENT JOB. BHUTTO NOTED THAT BUGTI HAD CHANGED COURSE AFTER SOME PECULIAR ACTIVITIES LAST YEAR. DURING PROTRACTED STAY ABROAD IN 1972, BUGTI HAD BEEN INVITED BY INDIANS TO VISIT NEW DELHI AFTER SIMLA MEETING. THERE HE HAD MET PRIMIN GANDHI, WHO HAD SAID (BUGTI TOLD BHUTTO) THAT " THEY" WERE STILL THINKING PARTITION OF INDIA HAD BEEN MISTAKE. BHUTTO SAID THAT SHER MOHAMMAD MARRI, A BALUCHI ARRESTED RECENTLY ON CHARGES OF ARMED DISSIDENCE, HAD ALSO GONE TO INDIA LAST YEAR.

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5. ON THE SOVIET ARMS DISCOVERED LAST MONTH IN THE

IRAQI EMBASSY HERE, BHUTTO SPECULATED THAT THEY WERE
INTENDED FOR USE IN THIS REGION. HE THOUGHT IT
MIGHT HAVE BEEN PLANN
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ACTION NEA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 EUR-10 PRS-01 T-01

PM-03 PA-01 USIA-04 CIAE-00 INR-09 NSAE-00 RSC-01

DODE-00 IO-03 RSR-01 /065 W
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R 141141 Z MAR 73
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8338
INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
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AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 2133

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6. BHUTTO SAID HE THOUGHT THERE WOULD NOT BE TOO
MUCH DIFFICULTY IN GETTING A CONSTITUTION APPROVED BY
CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY BY APRIL 21(FIRST ANNIVERSARY
OF THE CURRENT INTERIM CONSTITUTION). HE WAEPLANCNG
TO HAVE NEW CONSTITUTION COME INTO SURLCE ON AUGUST 1-1.
(INDEPENDENCE DAY). HE THEN SURPRISED ME BY CONFIDING
THAT HE WAS ALSO PLOANNING, IN CONNECTION NEW CONSTI-
TUTION, TO CALL FOR NEW NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL
ELECTIONS. (HE SAID THIS WAS KNOWN ONLY TO HANDFUL
HIS CLOSE CONFIDENTS.) HE ACKNOWLEDGED THIS WOULD
TEND TO CUT GROUND FROM UNDER POLITICAL OPPOSITION,
SOME OF WHOSE SPOKESMEN HAVE BEEN ARGUING VOCIFEROUSLY
THAT PPP GOVT SHOULD SUBJECT ITSELF TO NEW ELECTIONS
UNDER NEW CONSTITUTION. AS MATTER OF FACT, BHUTTO
WENT ON, NEITHER NAP NOR SOME OTHER PARTIES REALLY
RELISH PROSPECT OF NEW ELECTIONS. BHUTTO PREDICTED
THAT PPP WOULD NOT ONLY RETAIN ROUGHLY CURRENT
MAJORITY IN PUNJAB AND SIND BUT WOULD IMPROVE ON ITS
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PRESENT MINORITY POSITION IN NWFP AND BALUCHISTAN. HE SAID HE WAS THINKING OF CALLING FOR ELECTIONS FOR DECEMBER 7 (THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS UNDER YAHYA REGIME.)

7. BHUTTO ACKNOWLEDGED HIS ANTICIPATION THAT HE WILL LEAVE PRESIDENCY AND BECOME PRIME MINISTER WHEN NEW CONSTITUTION ENTERS INTO FORCE PROBABLY ON AUGUST 14.

8. COMMENT: BHUTTO REVEALED TWO SURPRISES: PLANS FOR EFFECTIVE DATE OF NEW CONSTITUTION AND NEW GENERAL ELECTIONS. BY DEFERRING IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW CONSTITUTION UNTIL LAST DATE WHEN THIS LEGALLY POSSIBLE UNDER INTERIM CONSTITUTION, HE MAY UNDERCUT TO SOME EXTENT PLANNED OPPOSITION TACTICS TO LAUNCH ALL- OUT CAMPAIGN AGAINST NEW CONSTITUTION WHEN IT IS PASSED. IF INTERIM CONSTITUTION CONTINUES IN EFFECT UNTIL AUGUST, IMMEDIACY OF DISPUTE OVER NEW CONSTITUTION FADES SOMEWHAT. DEFERRING CONSTITUTION WILL ALSO GIVE PRESIDENT MORE TIME TO SORT OUT VARIETY OF POLITICS AND TECHNICAL QUESTIONS THAT WILL ARISE IN CONNECTION WITH CHANGE- OVER FROM PRESIDENTIAL TO PARLIAMENTARY FORM OF GOVERNMENT. IN ADDITION, BHUTTO WILL GAIN FURTHER TIME TO SEEK SOLUTION TO POLITICAL CRISES IN BALUCHISTAN AND NWFP, WHERE HE WOULD CERTAINLY PREFER TO HAVE REASONABLY COMPATIBLE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS INSTALLED AND TESTED FOR TRIAL PERIOD BEFORE NEW CONSTITUTION TAKES EFFECT.

9. THERE HAVE BEEN CALLS BY OPPOSITION ELEMENTS FOR NEW GENERAL ELECTIONS OR FOR PARTIAL ELECTIONS TO INCREASE SIZE OF CENTRAL AND PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES TO LEVEL AUTHORIZED UNDER NEW CONSTITUTION. HOWEVER, SUCH DEMANDS HAVE BEEN MUTED OF LATE PROBABLY, AS BHUTTO SAYS, BECAUSE MAJOR PARTIES NOT REALLY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT FACING FRESH ELECTIONS. ALTHOUGH PRESENTLY CONSTITUTED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY COULD NORMALLY CONTINUE UNTIL AUGUST 1977, BHUTTO MAY BE WISE IN CALLING FRESH ELECTIONS EARLIER RATHER THAN LATER DURING THIS PERIOD SINCE IN COURSE OF TIME HIS PARTY CAN EXPECT TO SEE SOME NATURAL EROSION OF POPULAR SUPPORT.

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*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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